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MARGOLIS' "MANUAL OF TALMUDIC ARAMAIC"

A Manual of the Aramaic Language of the Babylonian Talmud:
Grammar, Chrestomathy, and Glossaries. By MAX L. MARGOLIS, Ph. D., Professor in the Dropsie College. Munich: C. H. BECK'SCHE VERLAGSBUCHHANDLUNG (New York: G. E. STECHERT & Co.), 1910. xvi + 99 + 184* pages. [Title of German edition: *Lehrbuch der aramäischen Sprache des babylonischen Talmuds.*]

JEWISH science of the nineteenth century produced but one short guide to the grammar of the Aramaic idiom of the Babylonian Talmud. In the year 1865 Samuel David Luzzatto published an elementary grammar of that idiom in connection with a grammar of Biblical Aramaic; the book appeared subsequently in a German (1873), English (1876), and Hebrew (1880) translation. This work of the famous author, one of the most noted pathfinders of the modern science of Judaism, was of too small a compass to satisfy the demands for an accurate presentation of the language of the Babylonian Talmud. Several monographs (as Rosenberg's *Das aramäische Verbum im Babylonischen Talmud*, 1888, and Liebermann's *Das Pronomen und das Adverbium*, 1895) offered valuable contributions for that purpose. The merit, however, of producing the first systematic grammar of the Aramaic idiom of the Babylonian Talmud on a comprehensive scale was reserved for the mighty step forward which Jewish studies in America took toward the end of the nineteenth century. From 1897 to 1900, Caspar Levis published serially in the volumes of the *American Journal of Semitic Languages* his Grammar of the Babylonian Talmud; the work also appeared in book-form (Cincinnati 1900). A plan for a similar work had some years previously been conceived by another American scholar. As far back as 1894, as we

learn from the Preface to the work constituting the subject of the present review, a suggestion for the plan in question came to Dr. Margolis who was the author of two valuable publications dealing with the textual criticism of the Talmud, from Professor H. L. Strack, of the University of Berlin. While the work was delayed by a series of external circumstances, it nevertheless did not rest entirely; it resulted at last in the publication of the "Manual of the Aramaic Language of the Babylonian Talmud" which appeared at the beginning of the present year and forms the third part of the *Clavis Linguarum Semiticarum* edited by Professor Strack.

In its external appearance, the new Manual follows closely the style of Strack's Hebrew Grammar with the ninth edition of which the series just mentioned opens. Margolis' work is divided into two parts: a Grammar (pp. 1-97) and a Chrestomathy (pp. 1*-83*) to which are attached two Glossaries (pp. 84*-184*). What gives to the first part its singular value is the circumstance that it offers, over and above an Introduction, a Phonology, and a Morphology, also a *Syntax*, which is thus the first attempt at a systematic presentation of the syntactical peculiarities of the language of the Babylonian Talmud, neither Luzzatto nor Levis having treated of this part of the grammar. In the four subdivisions of his syntactical work (pp. 62-97), in connection with which Nöldeke's Syriac and Mandaic Grammars served as a model (p. viii), Margolis has deviated from the principle of conciseness almost carried to excess which marks the other portions of the Grammar: the rules are illustrated by a wealth of well selected examples which are accompanied by excellent renditions.

The conciseness just referred to in the paragraphs dealing with Phonology and Morphology renders the use of the book a trifle difficult. Nevertheless, the *certainly* and *clearness* with which the phenomena of the language are comprehended in rules and paradigms readily assist in surmounting the difficulty inherent in the extraordinary brevity of expression. The reader feels that he is everywhere treading upon the safe ground of manuscript tradition and of a rich collection of material resulting from an independent study of the Talmudic texts. In addition to the one

only complete manuscript of the Talmud (Munich), the author has also made use of several other manuscripts of the Talmud for the purpose of ascertaining the correct orthography and grammatical forms. In this connection one is surprised to find missing from the list of manuscript sources (p. xv) the large fragment of the tractate *Keritot*, the oldest extant manuscript portion of the Babylonian Talmud (it dates from the year 1123), which has been made accessible through publication by S. Schechter and S. Singer (*Talmudic Fragments*, 1896) and which contains many noteworthy peculiarities (see the writer's review in *JQR.*, IX (1897), 145-151).

Both in the formulation and grouping of the rules and in the construction of the paradigms the author has been successful in realizing the greatest measure of completeness within the smallest possible compass in connection with the presentation of that which is most essential in the material. In particular, the *paradigms* which occupy more than half of the space allotted to the Morphology, deserve to be singled out. They do not consist in the customary enumeration of the inflectional forms of one and the same verbal root (or of one and the same noun) among which are thus included forms nowhere to be met with; the author has rather chosen to incorporate in the rubrics of his paradigms solely such forms of the most varied origin as actually occur. Each single form which figures in his paradigms actually occurs in the sources; thus the paradigm loses its artificial character and serves in itself as a direct introduction to the living linguistic material deposited in the texts of the Babylonian Talmud. The paradigms are supplemented by the first division of the Chrestomathy in which, with constant references to the paragraphs of the Grammar, each form appearing in the paradigms is illustrated by a large group of diverse examples derived from the texts.

A further scientific merit attaches to the manner in which the author conceived his function as a grammarian in that, within the Aramaic texts of the Babylonian Talmud, he sedulously distinguishes those portions which exhibit remnants of an *earlier* form of the language (see p. 2 f.) from those in which the

common Aramaic vernacular of Babylonian Jewry manifests itself. Archaic (or non-Babylonian) forms are marked in the Grammar by a prefixed †, while in the Chrestomathy the earlier linguistic material is placed in separate sections (designated by the letter A).—Interesting is the observation that in the Munich manuscript “there is a tendency towards reducing the earlier language to the level of the later and common speech” (p. 3).

Two circumstances are prejudicial to the usefulness of Margolis' Grammar so eminently suited for the scientific study of the Aramaic language of the Babylonian Talmud: the grammatical forms are given *without vowel points*, and throughout no *references* are attached even to rarer forms. The first defect is remedied by the fact that, in the Glossary, almost all forms occurring in the Grammar and Chrestomathy are vocalized. The other renders verification difficult, which circumstance, however, amounts to no serious defect considering the author's trustworthiness which is readily recognized. Nevertheless it would be desirable to know, for an example, whence the form **מסתכלא** for the plural feminine of the participle Itpa'al is derived; the form is adduced both in the paradigm (p. 45) and in the Chrestomathy (p. 18*). Levias (§ 372, p. 102) has **מסתכלן** only, but his reference to “Beṣah 20a” is clearly a slip of the pen. In particular, the absence of references is a matter of regret in connection with the sentences of the first division of the Chrestomathy. It would have constituted a great advantage even for the beginner to be afforded the opportunity of locating each of those pithy sentences and other elements taken out of a larger context, and thus better understanding them. The usefulness of the present Manual in introducing the student immediately to an understanding of the Talmudic texts would in this way have been enhanced. However, no blame attaches to the author in this respect. In his manuscript “the sources of each form, phrase, or sentence, were indicated. But in order to reduce the bulk and cost of the volume, it was deemed advisable to drop them in all but a few cases” (Preface, p. viii). It is to be hoped that in a subsequent edition these references will be fully restored.

The first division of the *Chrestomathy* has been adverted to. It follows the Grammar closely and contains single grammatical forms and sentences containing such forms. The sentences have been chosen with great circumspection and are well suited for the purpose of acquainting the student with the language and spirit of the Talmud. In a greater measure still this is true of the second division which contains "connected texts" of a considerably diverse size, 6 and 43 pieces all told. The six pieces occupying the first place are specimens of the "older language" (p. 34*-37*). The second and much longer group consists of anecdotes of varied contents (Numbers 1-29, p. 37*-46*), legends (Numbers 30-32, p. 46*-50*), narratives from the life of the Tannaim or Amoraim (Numbers 33-39, p. 50*-58*), texts from the "Chapter of the Saints", i. e. the third chapter of the tractate Taanit (Number 40, ten pieces, p. 58*-65*); the story of the fall of the Jewish state from Giṭṭin 55*b*-57*a* (Number 41, p. 65*-69*), wonder-stories from Baba batra 73*a*-74*b* (Number 42, p. 70*-74*); lastly of halakic texts (Berakot 2*a*-3*a*, Pesahim 102*b*-104*a*, Rosh ha-shanah 2*a*-3*a*, Giṭṭin 36*a*-37*a*). With reference to these texts, the author has adopted the praiseworthy method of selecting as a basis the form of the text of a certain manuscript source, for the most part of the Munich codex, but frequently also of the *editio princeps* (Bomberg 1520-1523), and of registering the most important variants in the footnotes. Occasionally this process has served to render the text obscure, as may be seen from some of the remarks as to details which follow below. The single pieces are introduced by parallel German and English headings which quite successfully serve to indicate the contents. I confess my inability to understand the heading of Number 22 (p. 43*).

The largest space in the book is given over to the Glossary wherein the sum total of the linguistic material found in the two parts of the Manual is treated lexically in a most exact manner. It is an excellent Glossary, arranged according to roots; the derivatives appear also separately accompanied by cross-references to the place where they properly belong. The accurate definition of each single form under each root and the adequate rendering of the meaning both in German and English are carried out con-

sistently and make the Glossary in the fullest measure minister to an understanding of the texts. The Hebrew words and phrases occurring within the Aramaic texts are recorded in a special Glossary (p. 180*-184*). In the Chrestomathy itself, these Hebrew elements are marked as such by a very practical device. I have come across some omissions in the Glossary which, however, we have reason to believe, constitute but sporadic exceptions. Thus there is wanting in the Glossary the word **מחמת** *on account of* (p. 63*, l. 4). In the Hebrew Glossary there is missing **גפה** [של רומי] of p. 42*, l. 9, as well as **הצר מות** *cemetery* of p. 44*, l. 3.

Before proceeding to a discussion of certain single passages in the work of Margolis, it may be proper to correct misprints which are relatively very few. Thus, p. 89, l. 7 from below, **ר. ובנתן** (for **ובנתך**); p. 17, l. 21, **ר. ארחלא** (for **ארחלא**).

Ad p. 3. As for the spelling with **ש** in the place of **ס**, it might be observed that specifically such Aramaic words are written with **ש** as occur also in Biblical Aramaic, in consequence whereof the spelling with **ש** became current.

P. 4. The use of **א** as a vowel letter occurs much more frequently in the older witnesses of the text than in the editions.

P. 12, l. 10. **בפירש** does not belong here; it is a Hebrew word..

P. 14, note 5. Margolis assumes for **סתמא** the pronunciation **סְתַמְא** without an intervening vowel between the first two consonants (after the analogy of **שְׁתִּים**; so also in the Glossary, p. 145*). I fail to perceive the cogency of this view, unless the justification be found in the "traditional" pronunciation (the corresponding Hebrew word is likewise pronounced traditionally "*stam*"); but surely the latter is not authoritative in matters grammatical. Hebrew **סְתוּ** and **סְתוּר** may serve as analogies for **סְתַם**.

P. 18, l. 10. It is not at all beyond doubt that the independent possessive pronoun **דִּירִי** originates in the combination of the relative pronoun with **יִר**. This theory, first pronounced by Luzzatto (p. 74) and reiterated by Nöldeke (*Mandäische Grammatik*, p. 332) who, however, failed to mention Luzzatto, has been rightly objected to by Dalman (*Gramm. des jüd.-pal. Aramäisch*, p. 87); it is ignored altogether by Levis (§ 128).

P. 20. In the table of triconsonantal nominal stems two columns are given over to "*med. y sive ʾ*" and "*ult. y sive ʾ*". I do not consider it permissible to place *y* and *ʾ* on an equal footing in the classification of roots. The forms which serve as an occasion therefor (as מוֹנָא from מוֹעֲנָא, פִּיקָא from פִּיקְעָא) are sporadic phonetic phenomena.

P. 32. In the list of cardinal numbers, the masculine numerals are given as feminine, and the feminine as masculine. Of course, the author has in mind the morphological fact; accordingly, in the Syntax (p. 73), the functional construction of masculine numerals with feminine objects and conversely is correctly stated. But in a practical Manual the function should have been mentioned at the very start on the occasion of the enumeration of the numerals so as to preclude any misconception. Nöldke, whom Margolis is in the habit of following both in his Syriac Grammar (p. 86) and in his Mandaic Grammar (p. 187), makes the syntactical function the basis of his table of cardinals, and not the grammatical form. In this instance the author has apparently followed Strack's example in the Hebrew Grammar; but then he ought to have made the heading to read after the fashion of Strack: "Masculine Forms joined to Feminine Objects", and conversely.

P. 75. In the clause מִתְּפַסְתָּ בְּנָנְכִי the preposition ב does not signify "into the thieves" but "together with thieves".

P. 76, l. 17. The courteous address by means of מֶר ("lord") is reproduced in the translation by the corresponding English manner of address ("to you, you"; in the German edition: "Ihnen", "Sie"). It is jarring to the ear when a modern mode of speech is thus obtruded upon the ancients.

P. 76, l. 17: "with the exegetical infin." But לִיהוּי which is alluded to is no infinitive, but imperfect 3 pers. sing. masc. with the relative conjunction.

P. 78, l. 12. The admonition of Raba to his disciples from Berakot 35b appears here as well as in the Chrestomathy, p. 26*, l. 18, with the reading דְּלֹא תִהְיוּ קַמָּי (after the Munich MS), whereas on p. 90, l. 19, the reading לֹא תִתְחַוּוּ קַמָּי is given.

P. 93, l. 8. The form in which the sentence is given differs from that which it has in the story concerning Abba Ḥilḳiah

(Ta'anit 23*b*) which is printed in full on p. 62* of the Chrestomathy; in a third form on p. 94, l. 6 f. from below.

P. 95, l. 8. The sentence adduced appears in full on p. 77, l. 16; the renderings vary (at least in the German edition).

P. 97. "Sometimes the conditional particle is dispensed with entirely". The first of the two examples, **בְּהָרַגְתָּ נָנוּב וְטַעַמָּא טַעוּם** (Berakot 5*b*), however, is no conditional clause at all; two imperatives are merely joined, of which the first takes the place of a conditional clause; but there is no occasion for the employment of a conditional particle.

P. 5*, note 1: "Bar N. = Jiṣḥaḳ bar Joḥ. N." Dele "Joḥ." (= **יִיחָנָן**); **ר' יִצְחָק נִפְחָא** was not the son of R. Johanan.

P. 6*. The proverb from Erubin 3*a* appears here in a different version from below p. 21*, last line.

P. 7*, l. 12. The proverb concerning poverty which is becoming to the Jews (Hagigah 9*b*) opens here with the word **נָאָה** which is designated as Hebrew. As a matter of fact, however, the first word must have been originally **יֵאִי**, which became corrupted into **יֵאִי** or **יֵאֵה**. So in the Palestinian sources where the proverb is ascribed to Aḳiba (cf. my *Agada der Tannaiten*, I², 282). The reading **נָאָה**, for **יֵאֵה** of the Talmud editions, is presumably found in the Munich MS., but is nevertheless nothing but the Aramaic adjective replaced by the more current Hebrew.

P. 25*, l. 11. In the sentence **הוּא יֵאִי וְנוֹלְתִּיהָ יֵאִי** (from Baba batra 111*a*) the feminine form **יֵאִיָּה** (**יֵאִיָּה**) should be placed for the second **יֵאִי**. In this form it is quoted by Levy (I, 311*a*) according to the reading of the 'Aruk.

P. 27*, l. 8 from below. In the sentence **לֹא נָאִי לְהוּ יוֹהֵרָא לְנָשִׁי** (from Megillah 14*b*) read **יֵאִי** for **נָאִי**. Here likewise the Munich MS. simply replaces the Aramaic adjective by the Hebrew.

P. 34*. At the end of Number 2, in the place of **נַע** read **נָד**, as the editions rightly have it Shabbat 63*b*. **נַע** of the Munich MS. (not registered by Rabbinowicz) represents a modification which is not justified. According to Levy (III, 353*b*), the whole clause **וְלָד כְּבֵר נָד וְלָד** is Hebrew.

P. 38*. Under Number 5 is given (from Shabbat 26*a*) the anecdote concerning the cruel mother-in-law. The latter says to

her daughter-in-law, **וילי ואחלי אשרנא**; which, according to the Glossary (p. 178), means. "Go and light the lamp". But then the preposition **א** yields no sense. The same is true of the clause which follows: **אזלא ואיתלאי אשרנא**. Either the **א** before **שרנא** should be removed (as in the editions), or the verb should be taken in a different sense (perhaps *Itpe'el*, in the sense: *lift oneself up*).

P. 40*. Number 14, from *Shabbat 151b*, should have concluded with the interpretation of the school of Ishmael (**גלגל** (**הוא שחזר בעולם**) which follows in the texts the quotation from Deut. 15, 10 (**בגלל**); without that, the piece yields no sense.

P. 40*, l. 2 from below. After **ההוא יומא** insert the word **ראינסיבא** which is found in the Munich MS.

P. 61*, l. 4 from below. After **עלמא** the word **בחרובא** is missing which is indispensable for the sense.

P. 64*. In the clause (from *Taanit 25a*): **מי שאמר לשמן והרליק**: **יאמר לחומץ וירליק** the Hiphil would have to be taken in the sense of the Kal in order to make sense. Such is apparently not the intent of the author; at least the Glossary is silent concerning it. Hence we ought to replace the reading of G (=MS. of the University Library at Göttingen) with that of the editions (**וירלוק**) both times; in the first place, **ורלק** would be more correct). The reading with the Hiphil is found also in M which has in both places **שירליק**. In that case the original will have read for both verbs **שירלוק**.

P. 152*. The query with regard to the Persian origin of **פרדכשא** may be well left out; the same holds good of the query at **תכתקא** (p. 177*).

The above corrections may testify to the attention with which I have gone through the excellent Manual of Margolis. It offers within a narrow compass a wealth of information and is preeminently qualified to advance the philological study of the Talmud and to serve as an introduction thereto.

The Editors have been kind enough to let me see the foregoing review in proof, and with their permission and that of Professor Bacher I append the following remarks:

The form **מסתכלא** occurs Pes. 113b Bomb.

In the clauses **אולא ואיתלאי אשרנא, זיל ואחלי אשרנא** I supply an object and translate: "Go and light (a fire) at the lamp", "She went and lit (a fire) at the lamp". The verbal forms are clearly *Afel*, Rashi paraphrases correctly: **הדליק**. Comp. Pes. 103b **מתלי נר** **אשרנא**, where **מתלי** is an error for **נר**, comp. RSHbM MS. Munich **נר** **אשרנא**. Rabinowicz (on *Shabbat*) has entirely failed to understand the verbal forms in M.

In the clause **מי שאמר לשמן והדליק יאמר לחומץ וידליק** I take the *Hifil* forms in the sense of an "inner causative". My silence in the Glossary is due to the fact that I considered the force of the *Hifil* just referred to amply treated in the current text-books of Hebrew grammar. The reading of G seems to me to be correct.

MAX L. MARGOLIS